



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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“Main Street Applauds City of Gulfport’s Adoption of Existing Building Code”

The Gulfport City Council unanimously adopted the Existing Building Code, a code within the 2003 International Building Code which specifically addresses issues associated with the rehabilitation of historic buildings. The Council’s unanimous adoption of the code allows for immediate implementation of the new code, which will co-exist with the 2003 International Building Code.

“We worked with downtown property owners to identify issues that may cause downtown properties to sit vacant and in various stages of disrepair,” said Lisa Bradley, Gulfport Main Street Association Executive Director. “After discussing a number of issues, including high insurance rates and construction costs, we determined that the issue we could and should address is that the International Building Code, as it was adopted, does not make allowances for conditions specific to historic properties. We spoke with numerous professionals from other historic communities and without a doubt, the Existing Building Code is the tool we need to promote downtown revitalization.”

The Existing Building Code is an extra set of guidelines and tools for building officials to use when determining a building’s condition and eligibility for occupancy; it in no way replaces the IBC, which will still be used in most cases.

The Existing Building Code offers a practical approach to restoring old buildings, while maintaining the requirements of structural integrity and public safety, whereas the International Building Code treats all buildings the same. Older buildings were constructed long before current codes were established, and therefore, many of the older buildings do not meet certain new code requirements. For example, an older building would have a sprinkler system for fire protection that would be unacceptable under the IBC. The Existing Building Code allows for the sprinkler system to remain as long as the owner puts other fire separation, alarm and protection systems in place.

“The Existing Building Code is used widely throughout the state and the country as a mechanism to promote downtown revitalization,” said Main Street Design Chairperson Johnny Olsen. “I believe that the flexibility within the Existing Building Code will allow property owners to take on projects that before were-cost prohibitive.”